

**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

August 23, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.
Department of Administration

APPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

TAC members present

Ms. Fran Shocket, Chair
Ms. Sue Barker
Mr. Michael Cassidy
Ms. Elaine Colarusso
Mr. David Everett representing
 Mr. Robert Azar
Mr. Daniel Porter
Mr. George Monaghan
Mr. Barry Schiller
Mr. Robert Shawver
Ms. Jane Sherman
Ms. Pam Sherrill
Ms. Lillian Picchione representing
 Mr. Mark Therrien
Mr. Michael Walker
Mr. Michael Wood

Public Member
Greenways Alliance
Public Member
Town of East Greenwich

City of Providence
RI Airport Corporation
RI Consulting Engineers (RISE)
RI Sierra Club
RI Department of Transportation
Public Member
RI Chapter, American Planning Association

RI Public Transit Authority
RI Economic Development Corporation
Town of Burrillville / RI League of Cities and Towns

TAC members absent

Mr. Dan Boudouin
Mr. Alan Brodd
Mr. Mark Carruolo
Mr. Russ Chateauneuf
Dr. Judith Drew
Mr. Paul Romano
Mr. Henry Sherlock
Ms. Dinalyn Spears
Mr. Everett Stuart
Dr. Robert Vanderslice

Providence Foundation
Town of Cumberland
City of Warwick
RI Department of Environmental Management
Governor's Commission on Disabilities
Public Member
Construction Industries of RI
Narragansett Indian Tribe
RI Association of Railroad Passengers
RI Department of Health

Others in attendance

Mr. Dan Berman
Ms. Barbara Breslin
Mr. Grant Dulgarian
Mr. Don Rhodes
Mr. Kevin Viveiros

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Ecology Action for RI
RIPTA Riders Alliance
Pare Corporation

Statewide Planning Staff Present

Mr. Jared Rhodes
Ms. Linsey Callaghan
Ms. Ronnie Sirota

Chief
Supervising Planner
Principal Planner

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Ms. Shocket called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Approval of June 28, 2012 Meeting Minutes – *for action*

Upon motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Monaghan, the June 28, 2012 meeting minutes were accepted unanimously.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was no public comment on the Agenda items.

4. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)

- Overview of new federal transportation bill provided by FHWA – *for information*

Ms. Shocket stated that Ms. Breslin of FHWA would give the PowerPoint presentation on Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP – 21). Ms. Breslin then introduced Mr. Dan Berman of FHWA who began the presentation. Mr. Berman explained that the legislation extends the current transportation legislation, SAFETEA-LU until this September 30, 2012 and institutes new legislation called MAP-21 for two years until September 30, 2014. Mr. Berman also explained that MAP-21 includes themes such as strengthening the highway system, increasing jobs, and economic development. MAP-21 does contain new items. Mr. Berman continued that there is an increase in the safety fund. Rhode Island is a national leader in highway safety however Mr. Berman stated that we can always do better. MAP-21 simplifies the various funding programs and accelerates project delivery. The average funding is about the same as the prior legislation. The Highway Trust Fund was also continued for two years. However, there is a substantial consolidation of programs. The programs in MAP-21 include: National Highway Performance Program (NHPP); Surface Transportation Program (no separate bridge program); CMAQ; Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP); Highway Grade Crossing (is part of highway safety); Metropolitan Plan and Transportation Alternates. There also are no earmarks and all the discretionary programs except some small ones were discontinued. Mr. Berman explained that the biggest portion of the funding is for the National Highway Program and then the Surface Transportation Program. The Federal Transit Funding (FTA) will have a web seminar on August 24 detailing transit funding.

Next, Ms. Breslin explained the details of the individual programs. For the National Highway System (NHS) Program, the federal government enhanced the NHS to include all principal arterials, the Strategic Highway Network, and intermodal connectors as a means to ensure the strength of the NHS system. There will also be an Asset Management Plan required for all of states. Ms. Breslin continued that there is \$10 billion in programs still in the Surface Transportation Program. Overall, Transportation Alternatives has less funding and it will now be left up to the states' to determine how most of that funding is spent. The Transportation Alternatives program consists of the current Transportation Enhancement Program, Recreational Trail Program, and Safe Routes to School Program. The Highway Safety Program almost doubled to \$2.4 billion. CMAQ maintain almost level funding however there is increased flexibility with eligible programs. There are performance measures under Performance and Planning which are tied to all of the programs. Ms. Breslin stated that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will still be updated every four years. The Long Range Transportation Plan and the TIP will now need to include Performance Measures and it will probably take 18 months for the USDOT to develop official guidance. Ms. Breslin added that further details on MAP-21 are available at www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21 which explains all of the eligible funding activities. Ms. Breslin noted that

MAP-21 will have an October 1, 2012 transitional procedures phase in with follow-up guidance and regulations.

Questions from the TAC and staff followed the presentation. Mr. Rhodes asked what the ramifications would be for the TIP from MAP-21. Ms. Breslin replied that we will have to work together on converting the FY 2013 – 2016 TIP projects into the new funding categories. Ms. Breslin stated that it will probably take about a year to complete this work on the TIP. Ms. Breslin added that the new performance measures will feed directly into the projects listed in the TIP. Mr. Schiller asked about the TIGER Grant Program. Mr. Berman replied that the TIGER Grant Program did not make it into MAP-21. Mr. Berman added that there was extra funding which enabled the last round of TIGER Grant projects. Mr. Shawver asked about the \$500 million available for a project of national significance. Mr. Berman replied that he did not know the guidelines for that program as it is for discretionary funding.

5. Long range Transportation Plan 2030 Update

- **Proposed Scope of Update and Schedule – *for information***

Ms. Callaghan stated that although she previously told the TAC that there did not have to be an update to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), after further review by FHWA it has been determined that staff and the TAC will in fact need to proceed with an update to the Plan. This is in order to process TIP amendments and fully realize federal funds for transportation projects. In the meantime, there cannot be amendments to the FY 2013 - 2016 TIP until the Long Range Transportation Plan has been updated. Therefore, in order to complete this task quickly and still involve the public, Ms. Callaghan stated that staff has developed a balanced yet aggressive timeframe and limited scope for the update.

Based on guidance received from FHWA and FTA on the scope of the limited plan update, Ms. Callaghan distributed and described *Table 1. Scope of Transportation 2035, Limited Update 2012* chart she developed indicating which sections will be in the 2012 Update, which sections will be partially updated, and which sections will be updated in the future. Ms. Callaghan noted that the air quality, demographics, and financial sections of the Plan will be updated. She also noted that sections that will not be updated include the recommendations, goals, objectives, and general policies.

Mr. Walker asked when the update to the LRTP needed to be completed. Ms. Callaghan replied that staff anticipates the update to be completed by December 2012. Accomplishing this limited update will allow amendments to the TIP when necessary. Ms. Callaghan stated that this limited updated entitled *Transportation 2035* will be valid for four years from January 2013 to January 2017. The original intent was to complete the full comprehensive update within 2 years of completing the limited update, however based on recent guidance from FHWA, the US DOT Planning Guidance for LRTP's under MAP-21 will not be ready for at least 18 months. The Plan will be more performance based plan as opposed to the current needs based plan. Therefore Ms. Callaghan indicated that it would be better to wait for official US DOT guidance rather than to complete a full update which would then have to be updated prior to the plan's expiration.

Ms. Callaghan continued by stating that the FY 2013 – 2016 TIP will also need to be updated in next 2 years, prior to its four year expiration to bring it into conformity with MAP-21. This is expected to be completed in 2015 to 2016. Staff will also be working with RIDOT on the Asset Management Plan. The Comprehensive Update to the Long Range Transportation Plan is expected to begin in 2016 with completion by the 2017 expiration date. This achieves the goal of getting the TIP and the LRTP off of the same update schedule.

Mr. Schiller asked for clarification as to whether any project that is consistent with the Long Term Plan will still be consistent with the Long Term Plan after this process is completed, as well as any project that it is inconsistent with the Long Term Plan will still be inconsistent with the Long Term Plan. Mr. Rhodes added that the projects will also be in conformance with the TIP. Mr. Schiller stated that there is no policy change. Mr. Walker asked if the Air Quality portion needed to be done again. The reply was that it will be done again with VHB.

Mr. Schiller asked if Ms. Breslin or Mr. Berman could comment on the substance of where transit stands under MAP-21. Mr. Schiller stated that for example, tax free parking is easier to obtain over tax free transit benefits. Mr. Berman replied he cannot give the reason as particulars of the legislation resulted from negotiations in Congress. Mr. Berman noted that the particulars could be extended or modified with the next legislation. Mr. Rhodes suggested that the FTA representatives can be invited to speak at the TAC at the next meeting.

Next, Ms. Callaghan returned to describe the anticipated timeline for Transportation 2035. At the next TAC meeting on September 27 the draft update for Transportation 2035 will be presented and recommendation for authorization of a public hearing will be requested. Currently, the public hearing is scheduled for November 14 at 9:00 a.m. and again on November 15 at 6:30 p.m. which would be a special meeting of the TAC. The November 14th meeting would be instead of the scheduled November 29th TAC meeting. Ms. Callaghan noted that the November 15th public hearing/TAC meeting would be the last official time the TAC would be able to comment on the Plan. However subsequent to the TAC's initial review of the Plan on September 27th, there is also the October 25th TAC meeting, where the TAC could review and offer comments prior to the November public hearings. The draft will be available when it is advertised around October 14th. Ms. Callaghan stated that staff will request at the November 15th meeting that the TAC recommend approval of the Long Range Transportation Plan to the State Planning Council. The Plan will then be before the Technical Committee on December 7th and the State Planning Council on December 13th for final approval. If the Plan is approved by the State Planning Council on December 13th it will be forwarded to the Governor's office, followed by FTA and FHWA.

Mr. Walker asked about the status of updating the freight section of the Plan which according to the *Table 1. Scope of Transportation 2035, Limited Update 2012*, freight is not scheduled to be updated. Mr. Walker asked that if something comes up especially out of the new State Freight Advisory Committee could the plan be amended. Mr. Rhodes stated yes the plan could be amended. Ms. Callaghan stated that the current language contained in the Plan is hopefully general enough to allow most efforts to continue and support freight transportation in Rhode Island.

Ms. Callaghan then asked the TAC if there was general consensus in moving forward with this approach for *Transportation 2035*, despite the fact that there was not a formal vote request. Mr. Schiller asked if the public hearing could occur earlier than November 15th in order to allow the TAC more time to review the public comment. Mr. Rhodes responded that would not allow enough time to advertise due to the 30 day posting requirement. However, if the TAC is not comfortable at that time, the schedule could be pushed back later. The sentiment of the TAC was that were comfortable with this course of action.

Mr. Rhodes explained that this presentation will be given to the Technical Committee and State Planning Council in September. Mr. Shawver thanked FHWA and Mr. Rhodes and staff in explaining the schedule and need for the update to *Transportation 2035*.

6. Staff Report

- Rail Plan Update - RIDOT & Statewide Planning met with the consultant regarding Deliverable Items #2 and provided them with comments. The next State Rail Plan Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for October to review Deliverable Item 2.
- Staff received official approval on July 31, 2012 from FTA and FHWA for the FY 2013 – 2016 TIP.
- A Northeast Corridor Meeting was held August 22. It was led by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the Rail Investment Plan for the Northeast Corridor's Future. There will be a Tier 1 EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). The key stakeholders include Rhode Island along with seven other states, plus District of Columbia, commuter authorities, Amtrak, and NEC freight operators. The Rail Investment Plan will be looking at the Rail service connecting Boston, NYC, and DC. Ms. Callaghan added that the Northeast corridor is 457 miles long and was built 100-150 years ago. Key goals of the Plan include improved rail service to meet growing demand, strengthen connections, and a phased improvement program.

Mr. Cassidy asked how Northeast Corridor's Plan correlates with Rhode Island's State Rail Plan. Ms. Callaghan replied the Northeast Corridor Plan is more for the broad corridor and that Rhode Island's Rail Plan is a separate effort for just the State. Mr. Rhodes added that by the time Rhode Island's State Rail Plan is completed it can be used to provide feedback for the Northeast Corridor Plan.

- RIPTA: Staff held a meeting with FTA, FHWA, RIPTA, and RIDOT regarding TIP amendment procedures for discretionary grants – particularly related to two recent awards RIPTA has received.
- Ms. Callaghan stated that Ms. Lilly Picchione from RIPTA will provide the TAC with a summary of the two discretionary grants which can be accounted for under the existing funding amounts already listed in the FY 2009-2012 TIP and a description of the projects.

Ms. Lilly Picchione of RIPTA gave a project update regarding RIPTA's discretionary grants. Ms. Picchione stated that 50 buses will be starting to ride in November 2012. Additional funds were received in a discretionary grant process. The first is \$400,000 (\$500,000 total with the matching from RIDOT) for funding to improve connections from the Providence Train Station to Kennedy Plaza including street furnishings, improvements on Memorial Blvd., and the Exchange Street intersection.

Ms. Picchione further explained that the second grant was for the Eastside Bus Tunnel in Providence for \$820,000 (full amount with matching is \$1,025,000). Work is for items such as drainage, lighting and signage, and to improve passenger safety. RIPTA will look carefully at the MAP-21 funding when it becomes available and right now the funding looks promising. Ms. Shocket asked what kind of fuel the new buses will utilize. Ms. Picchione replied that RIPTA's fleet is about 25 percent is hybrid or clean diesel. She added that RIPTA is concerned with having a large part of the fleet consist of hybrid buses especially considering that the need to have sufficient technical staff trained to maintain the alternative type of bus. Ms. Sherrill asked if funding was for engineering or construction. Ms. Picchione replied

they are tied in together. Ms. Sherrill asked if the funding is sufficient. Ms. Picchione replies the funding is an important step towards the work that needs to be completed.

Mr. Schiller commented that he was at a meeting of Coalition for Transportation Choices and Rhode Island Association of Railroad Passengers which discussed the Providence Train Station Park. At the meeting a wish list was developed of \$6 million in improvements for the area; therefore, this grant is a good first step.

Mr. Rhodes explained that it was determined that these two grants do not need an amendment to the TIP since sufficient funding is already shown in the TIP with the 5309 Program. However, this presentation is to make sure the TAC is informed and to congratulate RIPTA. Mr. Rhodes added that an FTA representative was present at the meeting to confirm how to handle RIPTA's discretionary awards in the TIP. Mr. Schiller added that when RIPTA's board reviewed the purchasing of the hybrid buses through ARRA funding, the fuel source for the buses was discussed. Mr. Schiller also stated that at one of the RIPTA board meetings, the CEO had said the fuel economy on the hybrid bus was not as great as originally anticipated. Mr. Schiller said it probably is a wise decision not to order more hybrid buses at this point.

7. Additional Public Comment

Ms. Shocket asked if there was any additional public comment. Mr. Grant Dulgarian had a couple of questions that he would like to ask the RIPTA representative and Bob Shawver of RIDOT after the meeting. Mr. Stuart, TAC member, had a question about MAP-21. He asked FHWA about the appropriations to the states. Mr. Berman replied that the appropriations have not yet been determined by Congress, however they are looking at full funding. Mr. Schiller asked if transportation is subject to rescissions if Congress does not agree. Mr. Berman does not think that will happen, but rescissions are possible.

8. Other Business – *for discussion*

9. Adjournment

Upon motion of Mr. Walker, the meeting was moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Sherrill, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Submitted By: Ronnie Sirota, Principal Planner to Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary

Respectfully submitted,

Linsey Callaghan, TAC Secretary